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Presented to
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Cordial regards of
the author.

May 15/07

Lacey
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**The Gospel of
Optimism and
Other Sermons**

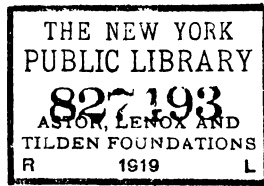
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1908**



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NEW YORK
JULY
1919

TO
THE BISHOP OF CALIFORNIA
NOBLE EXAMPLE
OF
COURAGE AND OPTIMISM

THESE PAGES ARE INSCRIBED IN AFFECTIONATE
REMEMBRANCE OF HAPPY YEARS
IN HIS DIOCESE.

Wm. Alexander Nason, Oct. 10, 1918

P R E F A C E

The sermons in this volume were delivered in the ordinary course of parochial ministrations and found their way into the daily press. They are collected at the suggestion of some who heard them and are placed in more permanent form in the hope that their simple message may be helpful to those who read them.

T. J. L.

Brooklyn
1908

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The Gospel of Optimism

Text

Rev. 17:14. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them.

The Gospel of Optimism



THE writer pictures a battle between the Lamb and the beast. It is your contest and mine. It is the struggle that goes on in every heart. There are two men in every man. There is the potential man, the Christ man, the man you ought to be, and there is the lower nature, of which Tennyson says —

Where is one that, born of woman, altogether can escape
From the lower world within him, moods of tiger, or of ape?

These two natures are in unceasing conflict. A chaplain reading the seventh chapter of Romans to some prisoners was interrupted by the question, "Where did you find those words? That is the story of my life." Yes, it is the story of every life. The good that I would I do not. The evil which I would not, that I do. It is the old struggle between the Lamb and the beast. The spiritual nature asserts itself against the carnal in deadly conflict.

But the imagery is applicable to the larger world about us. The beast represents power,

material, sensual, earthly. The Lamb represents the forces of Christ, meekness, patience, gentleness, sacrifice. These two armies are drawn up in fierce combat.

You remember that scene where David comes down to the Philistine camp. How goes the contest is the query in his heart. That is our question. We shall try to discover the progress of the battle. "Watchman, what of the night?" Are the principles of Christ gaining? Are they stifled and choked by the power of the world? Are there signs of victory? How goes the conflict between the Lamb and the beast?

Let me give you three reasons that confirm the gospel of optimism. First, there never was a time when men were so responsive to the Christian message. In spite of all the worldliness of our day there is a vast amount of devout, sincere faith. Day after day large churches in New York are crowded to the doors at noon with men. I have gone to Trinity this Lent and could not secure a seat. These great congregations are not brought together by music or sensational features of any kind. The sole motive is the simple message of God. And this is a type of the whole situation. I came across a significant passage in

a sermon by the late Dean Church. "Fifty years ago," he says, "a young man was ashamed to kneel down in church. He would have thought it unfashionable. Fifty years ago for a young man to stay for Holy Communion would have seemed eccentric, unreal, a profession beyond his years." Contrast the great corporate communions of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew which are a familiar feature in our church life to day.

It is a matter of record that on Easter day, 1800, just six persons received communion at St. Paul's Cathedral, London. Conditions have vastly improved. The vitality of religious interest is well shown in the missionary activities of college men and in the superior type of men who are offering for service in the foreign field. One of the most interesting and significant movements of this generation, says Robert E. Speer, is the spread of the influence of Christianity among students, and the late President Harper, commenting on the religious conditions of the older colleges, declared there is in them to-day far more sturdy belief in the fundamentals of the Christian religion and a religious interest which is absolutely unparalleled.

A second ground of optimism I find in the higher standard of our church life. Reading the

history of old Christ Church in Philadelphia, where Franklin was a vestryman, I was struck by the fact that the building fund was raised by the sale of lottery tickets. Two lotteries were projected by the vestry and tickets were sold for \$4 apiece. The incident excited no comment. But what parish would do anything like that to-day? Just now every voice is raised against gambling. The paramount issues are racing and betting. The State of New York is stirred and the governor is marshalling his forces to the overthrow of the race track and its attendant evils. This registers a marked growth in the Christian sentiment of our people.

The third reason for encouragement is the growing recognition of Christ's standards in the world about us. Christ is dictating the moral standards of humanity to-day. Those who do not profess Christianity are unconsciously moulded by its influence. It colors all our thinking. It is embodied in all our laws. It is wrought in the structure of our civilization. We note the triumph of Jesus in the growing consciousness of brotherhood, in the realization of the value of the individual, in the profound interest in child life, in the deepening sentiment in favor of arbitration,

in the spirit of sympathy and love that inspires and underlies our philanthropy.

I see a glorious vision of the Lamb moving to victory. There is a gradual process of evolution toward the highest and best. The Sermon on the Mount is permeating civilization. Toward its realization the world moves as surely as the needle moves to the pole. A scientific writer calls attention to the fact that the very animals that rely on violence for existence are disappearing and the meek and useful are taking their places. It is not the development of tooth and claw and brute force that causes survival. The monsters whose bones are dug up in the primal clay, the mammoth and mastodon of the geologic past, were creatures of immense strength. But the battle is not to the swift and strong. Jesus is justified. "The meek shall inherit the earth."

A traveler in Rome describes the splendor of the imperial city. There are the arch of Titus, the Palatine, Nero's golden palace, but the old shrines are deserted. None seek the temples to pour libations and offer votive gifts. Gone the old civilization with its wealth and luxury, its pomp and power, its brutality and vice. The

towers and domes of Christian churches rise against the blue Italian sky, and from each pinnacle there gleams the cross. Christ reigns. The cross triumphs. The Lamb has conquered. The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. Mid all the changes and fluctuations of history, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day and forever. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Lamb of God triumphant.

In the old city of Damascus there was a mosque which was once a Christian church and through the long years of Moslem domination there could still be seen the faint outline of a Christian inscription. Some years ago a fire swept the city. The mosque was destroyed, but the old inscription remained intact. The flames brought out the letters in greater clearness. And the words were these: "Thy kingdom O Christ, is a kingdom of all ages, and thy dominion endureth from generation to generation."



Creating an Atmosphere

Text

Acts 5: 15. They brought forth the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

Creating an Atmosphere



THIS is a remarkable illustration of the power of a consecrated life. As Peter went in and out among these people he created an atmosphere of health and confidence. The idea gained currency that there was a peculiar efficacy in the very shadow of this godly man. People brought their sick folk into the streets, that the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow them. His presence brought inspiration, renewal, health.

Creating an atmosphere is my theme. This incident affords an introduction and an illustration. We shall discover here the secret of a happy new year.

It is a principle of science that if a tuning fork be struck, every other fork will vibrate with it. This has been utilized in wireless telegraphy. The receiving instrument responds to the vibrations of the sending instrument and the message is transmitted.

Every material substance has its note. Have

you studied the mechanism of the organ? You see a mass of pipes varying in size and form. Some are wood or lead or tin. As the air passes through them it brings out the harmony of sound. The music is there. It needs to be brought out. Very beautifully the poet has said:

Look, how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold ;
There's not the smallest orb, which thou beholdest,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins.

It is profoundly true. The universe is the seat of harmony. There is a rhythm in the ocean billows that break against the shore in weird Gregorian tones. There is a rugged music in the forest trees bending under the stress of storm. There is a note of harmony in the splashing waterfall when the warm sunshine of glad spring has melted the winter snow. Mr. Osgood, of Boston, tells us that the cataract of Niagara gives forth a musical sound to the key of F.

What is true of the physical universe finds analogy in the realm of the soul. Every life has its note. Strike that note and you waken a response. The drunken profligate on the street has some good in him. Some day the thought,

perchance of childhood, of home, of mother borne in upon his heart will melt him to penitence. I have seen the boy at school listless and trifling. He falls under the influence of a teacher who understands him and he is fired with ambition and enthusiasm. I have seen an invalid weak and depressed. The physician comes in. He says "you are getting better." The sick man takes on new hope. The secret in any case is to strike the right note and create an atmosphere of hopefulness, confidence, optimism.

If you study the life of Jesus you will find that wherever he went he created an atmosphere of holiness and purity. This was the pre-eminent characteristic of his ministry. He saw the best in men. There is power in seeing the best. When Jesus beheld the fallen woman there flashed into his mind the vision of what she once was and he gently bade her go and sin no more. When the publican, whose occupation made him despised of his countrymen, came into his presence, Jesus saw in him a son of Abraham. When he stood at the bedside of the sick man his word was, "Son, be of good cheer." The Master always struck a note that drew out the divine in the man.

In an English cathedral there is a window made

by an apprentice out of bits of rejected glass. He cut off a corner here and a rough edge there until he had formed a design of marvelous beauty. So Jesus gathered up the wrecks and fragments of humanity. None was too insignificant, weak or unworthy. He used all in perfecting his great plans. And we must learn to do our work in Christ's spirit, seeing in each soul the splendid possibilities of the life of the child of God.

We have no authentic likeness of Christ. When the early Christians wanted to give expression to their conception of the Saviour they went back to the old mythology and chose Orpheus, master of music, whose notes charmed the wild creatures of the woodland. In this figure rudely scratched on the wall of the catacomb we read the impression of Christ's personality on the contemporary generation. Jesus awakened harmonies.

Just as the beast hears the call of the wild, as the seafaring man hears the call of the deep, as the children of the river never get beyond the fascination of the river's call so the human heart universally responds to the voice of Jesus Christ. He awakens the latent nobility of the soul.

Let this be my message for the new year.* If you

* New Year Sermon, 1908.

would make this year a happy one, create an atmosphere for God. Strike a note of confidence, of cheer, of sympathy. Bring to your associates fresh inspiration and a new outlook. Send out from your life a radiation of Christlike influence. Forget self in serving others. Give unsparingly, abundantly, and the year will bring a fulfillment of the divine promise: "Give and it shall be given unto you good measure, pressed down and shaken together and running over shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that he mete withal it shall be measured to you again."



The Bible's Self-Witness

Text

Amos 7: 14-15. Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit.

And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophecy unto my people Israel.

The Bible's Self-Witness



THIS was a dramatic moment in the history of Israel. The glory of the nation culminated under Jeroboam II. Bethel was his capital, the seat of a brilliant but corrupt court. Idolatry asserted itself in the worship of the sacred bull.

One day when the festivity was at its height a rough clad herdman appeared among the throng. A strange fire gleamed in his eyes as he forced his way through the merry-makers pronouncing doom and woe. The priest challenged his authority. Majestic in simplicity came the answer. I was no prophet, I was a herdman. And the Lord took me as I followed the flock.

Mark you he was a simple man, bred in the desert. He came delivering a message. There was no external authority back of him. No kingly decree sent him on his errand. No church official impelled him to speak. There was no miracle to authenticate his claim. The word vindicated itself. None dared gainsay.

I have chosen this as introductory to a few words

on the authority of the Bible. On what does the Scripture rest? Does it look for its credentials to some church council in the dim past? Like the message of Amos the authority of the Bible is in itself. The Bible holds its position by its own intrinsic power. The normal consciousness of humanity gives confirmation to its precepts. The sublimest ideals of the human mind find realization there. The loftiest aspirations of the soul find satisfaction. There is an answer to the deepest yearnings of the heart. In the terse statement of Prof. Nash, "The books of the Bible canonized themselves by their inherent merit. Long before they were officially sanctioned by the church they justified themselves to the spiritual consciousness of Christianity. Authority is theirs by divine right. Their merit is intrinsic and belongs as truly to them alone as the qualities of a triangle belong to a triangle."

I find in my Bible the accumulated religious experience of the people of God, of those choice spirits who drank most deeply of things divine. I find a rich store house of spiritual truth begotten of a long race experience.

There is an infinite variety of themes. Under forms of poetry, allegory, history, drama, men of

spiritual insight interpreted life in its relation to God. The Old Testament is the religious literature of an inspired people. The New Testament grew out of the bosom of the Christian church. On Pentecost there were no Christian Scriptures. The gospel was preached before a line of the gospel was written. The living voice pressed the truth on men's consciences and hearts. Men spoke to men and told the story. The first preachers did not go forth with the book in their hands but with the truth wrought into their souls and its power thrilling their hearts. They spoke with a certainty born of vital experience. The books grew out of the life of the Christian community.

The Christian society found itself in possession of literature that came into being as naturally as our English literature grew out of the life of the English people.

I turn to my Bible and I find there as in a mirror the outline of my own spiritual aspirations and struggles. The spirit in the book answers to the spirit of God in my heart as deep answers deep. Just as the word of the herdman prophet roused the people from one end of the land to the other so the word of God is its one witness speaking directly to the human heart. A chance passage

in the Bible won Augustine for God. A verse from Holy Scripture was the inspiration that gave birth to the Franciscan order. A Bible text snatched Francis Xavier from the gay dissolute life of the French capital and led him to God's service. One day there flashed into the mind of Luther a passage from the word of God with overpowering force and the Reformation was born. One day in New York City a young physician carelessly opened a Bible. His eye lighted on the question, "Why persecutest thou me." The appeal kept ringing in his ears. He could not get away from it until like the apostle he knelt in submission and asked what wilt thou have me to do? That hour Richard Channing Moore the second bishop of Virginia was won to Christ.

Mighty is the record of the achievements of God's word. I could tell of men and women who learned the Scripture at a mother's knee and went forth into life's battle carrying the Bible with them a mother's parting gift and in their hours of trial and doubt and temptation the sacred page has breathed into their souls a message from God. And if you ask the secret of its power I think the answer is found in the story of its origin: "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Character Growth

Texts

Matt. 21:9. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David.

Matt. 27:23. But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

Character Growth



THE contrast suggested by these texts is significant. The same men who shouted hosanna were clamoring for the crucifixion in less than a week. It illustrates the weakness of faith that rests on impulse rather than conviction. The mere enthusiasm of the moment, passing, changing, unstable, is not a sufficient foundation for religious life. The multitude was no doubt sincere, but its devotion lacked depth. This is the danger of emotion. The system of our Church does not depreciate enthusiasm but we want an enthusiasm that springs from conviction and strikes its roots deep down in mind and heart.

The Church stands for the orderly development of the spiritual life. She begins with the child. She admits him to membership by baptism, teaches him the duties and responsibilities of the Christian life, strengthens him with the gift of God's spirit in confirmation. He has then reached spiritual maturity and claimed his full citizenship in the kingdom. The Christian life is as natural as the

growth of a tree and the ripening of the fruit. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in in the ear.

The Bible furnishes two distinct instances of the way in which souls are led to God. One is the case of Saul of Tarsus. His conversion was instantaneous and extraordinary. In one moment conviction swept over him with mighty force and brought him to the Master's feet. This has been used by some as the basis of a revival system in which men are rushed into the kingdom in a cyclone of religious fervor mid noise and shouting.

Men have inferred that there must come a conscious change at a given moment, under the stress of intense excitement. Multitudes are waiting to-day for this peculiar spiritual crisis and are hesitating and distressed because they have felt nothing of the kind.

Christian biography furnishes abundant illustration of the suddenness and power of a mighty conviction taking hold on a man and changing the whole trend of his life. There are signal instances of such experience in the lives of St. Augustine, Francis of Assissi, Pascal and Luther.

But we fall into grave error when we try to make the experience of one the type of all. There

is another picture in the Bible which illustrates the experience of the larger number of Christians. It is the picture of Timothy. His was no emotional conversion. His faith was the direct inheritance from pious grandmother and mother. From a child he knew the Holy Scriptures. He could point to no time from early childhood when he did not lisp his prayer and regard himself the child of God. This is the more common type. When Phillips Brooks was in St. Paul's Church, Boston, with a friend one day he pointed to a pew and said: "There is my mother's pew. Her prayerbook is in it now. There I listened to great sermons and learned to love the church."

If I were to put the question to each one of you, when did you become a Christian, you would probably find on reflection there was never a time when you were not in touch with God. Your spiritual life deepened and matured gradually. Some people used to say that it was possible to know the exact hour, moment and second when we receive what was called Christian conversion. "If that were true," says Bishop Burgess, "then the boy ought to know the exact time when he became a man." The biographer of Bishop Cobbs says that Cobbs went through no specific spiritual convulsion

to which he could assign a date. He was never converted in a technical sense because he had nothing to be converted from unless it were the teachings of a pious mother. He had no vices to discard and no moral throes to suffer. From such his Christian nurture had effectually shielded him.

Our conception of religion rests on the idea of orderly, natural, symmetrical growth. It is not sudden, violent, haphazard.

The development of Christian character is gradual. That little girl coming in her sweet innocence to confirmation, or the jolly, active boy approaching his first communion does not have the same depth of spiritual experience as the veteran who has wrestled with sin all his life and by many a fall has learned the way of the victorious spirit.

Each age has a spiritual experience of its own. Your child will not express religion in the same way as the aged saint whose faith, mellowed by the years and sorrows, has stood the test and gone down to the bed rock of reality. No greater mistake can be made than to expect children to be religious in the same way that parents are.

Henry Drummond once said to a company of boys, "If you are going to be Christians, be Christians as boys, not as your grandmothers. If you can-

not read your Bible by the hour don't think you are necessarily a bad boy. When you are your grandmother's age you will have her religion."

The earlier faith gives place to the questionings of mature years. The soul struggles, wrestles and reaches certitude only through agony of spirit. Doubt, hesitation, suspense attend the conflict. Conviction deepens mid the stress and storms of life. The comfort of religion means little in the frolicsome days of youth. But it takes on new significance as you stand by the coffin of a loved one and lay the dear form to rest. Then only does the full meaning sweep over the soul and the assurance of resurrection takes fresh reality. In hours of sorrow, loneliness, disappointment, some text flashes into your mind a divine message. You have heard the words a hundred times. They never carried such force before.

There is nothing so lovely as a Christian old age. Faith brightens the closing days of life. How beautiful to grow old in this way, to behold life's task finished and calmly await the sunset with a confidence that is the outcome of years.

I dwell then on the value of home religion, of a mother's prayers, of parental faith, of a religion that takes form under the quiet influence of the fire-

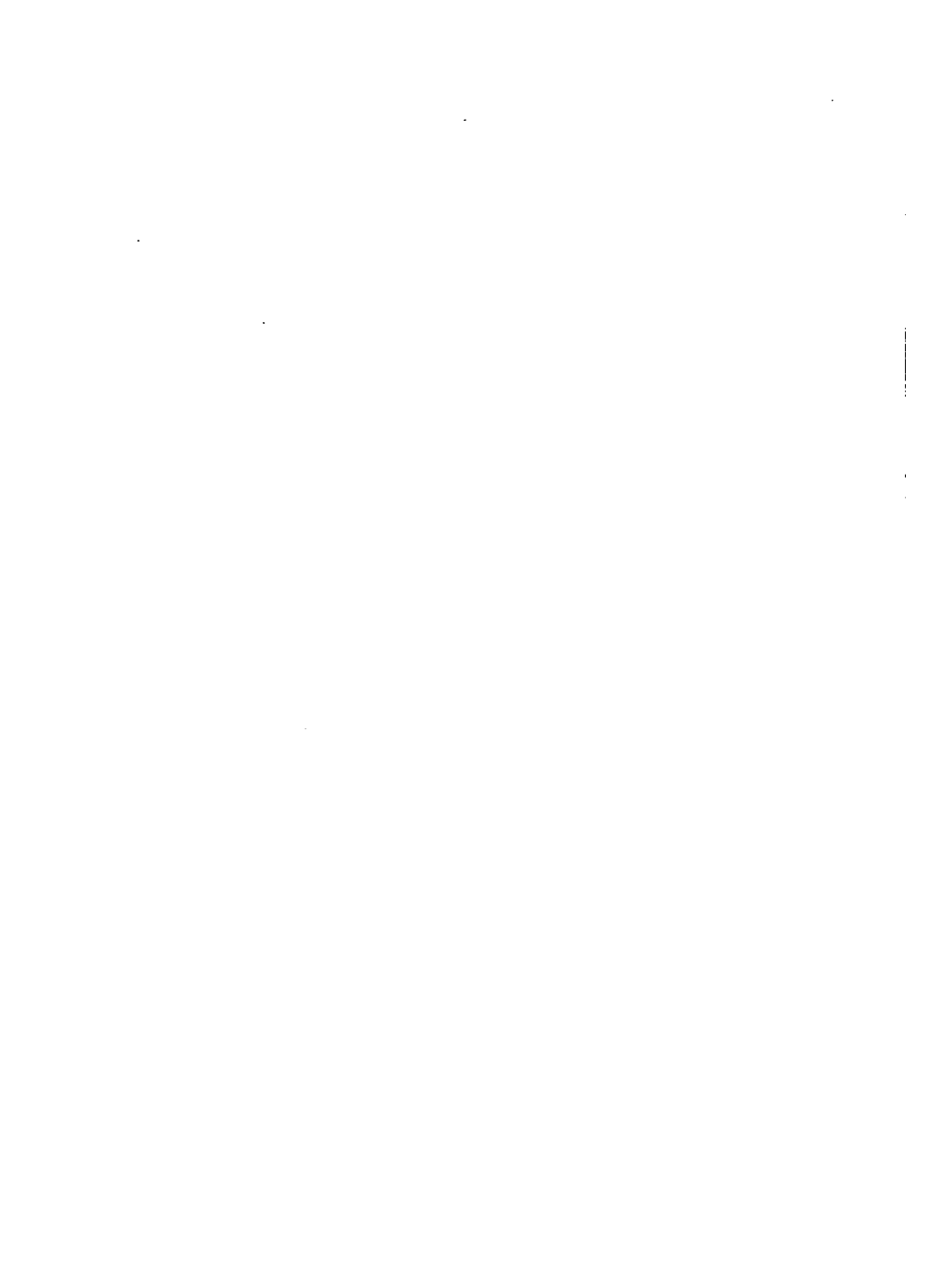
side. I want to plead for earnest, careful teaching which engenders conviction and as the religious life matures it rests not on impulse or caprice, but upon fundamental verities that are so wrought into the character that they have become part and parcel of the life.



Christ Crucified

Text

**1 Corinthians 1-2. I determined not to know anything among
you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.**



Christ Crucified



ST. Paul's ministry at Corinth passes in review. He had been among them in weakness and fear and much trembling. But the burden of his message was ever the same, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. His experience fulfilled the Master's promise, "I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me." There was an attractive, persuasive power in the preaching which drew men in penitent tears to the foot of the cross.

The heart responds to the idea of sacrifice. Deep down in human nature there is something to which the heroic appeals. Why is it that the soldier's life attracts? Why does every child run to see the procession of warriors marching through the town? Why does your boy say, "O, papa, I'm going to be a soldier?" It is because the soldier stands for strength, hardness, duty. It draws out the best that is in a man.

Some years ago when I was journeying through Colorado I happened to look out upon the mountain, and lo I beheld the outline of a cross. As

the storms of centuries beat upon the rock they had worn great fissures in the mountain side and the cross was wrought in the stone. This is a parable of life. The cross is imbedded in the heart of nature. The idea of sacrifice runs through all history. Progress is bound up with sacrifice. You remember that day when the Swiss were fighting the Austrians. They strove in vain to break the phalanx of spears until one man broke through the line. He received the spear points in his breast but over his dead body his comrades charged to victory. There can be no mighty movement without sacrifice. There is always a life laid down. There is ever a victim offered up.

Christianity is a religion for men because it accords with human life. It is not all roses and harps and golden streets. With clarion call it summons men to duty here and now. St. Paul discerned this. He knew the power of the gospel lay in its insistence on self-denial. That was why early in the history of the church the eucharist intrenched itself as the central idea of Christian worship. The climax of tragedy in life was recognized in the sacrifice of Christ. Worship grew around the altar because the very essence of

the faith was self-denial. The cross surmounted the great cathedral, and the aspiration of every believer found voice in the apostle's words: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ crucified is the heroic figure of the ages forceful in its appeal to men because men love heroism. They admire courage; they are thrilled by bravery.

If the church to-day is to prove a power among men she must lay her emphasis on the heroic; preaching a manly religion for manly men determining to "know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Let the church insist on great tasks. Let us not be afraid to make large demands. I think we touch here the secret of keeping men and boys in the church. If we can point to the heroic side of Christianity, if we can show the growing lad that strong men are doing Christian work, the value of religion will force itself upon him with irresistible strength. The young man wants a work to do which is worthy of his power. He cares little for a religion that spends itself in hymn-singing and effervescent aspiration entirely foreign to life in a work-a-day world. The vigorous man of this century wants a task worthy of his mettle.

When the country called there was no lack of volunteers. The very flower of the nation offered itself. They fought at Gettysburg for thirteen dollars a month. When Garibaldi raised his banner he addressed his soldiers: "I have nothing to offer but hunger, sickness, death. Let all who love the fatherland follow me," and they did follow with an enthusiasm that knew no bounds. Only show men a worthy cause and no difficulty will deter the quick response.

The church must appeal to the innate chivalry of nature; she must prove herself the inspirer of heroism if she is to maintain her hold, and the glory of Christianity is that she is equal to the task. We can point to a long line of leaders whose heroism thrills the community. The history of the church teems with illustration. Now it is Coleridge Patteson sacrificing himself for the islands of the sea; now it is Hannington dying alone in the African jungle; now it is Bishop Rowe on the snow trails of the Alaskan wild declining an easier field in a pleasanter climate, declaring, "I am determined so help me God to stand by my post in Alaska." Again it is Ingram waging battle with the sin and misery of the London slum.

This is men's work. It appeals to the best man-

hood of the nation. Christianity is worthy because it inspires life. It presents a motive for service and I plead with you to give yourselves personally to the work. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service."

In olden days in Scotland a fiery cross was sent throughout the clans to summon to battle. Scathed with flame and dipped in blood the fatal emblem roused hut and hamlet to arms. The cross has gone forth to-day. It calls the Church to awaken and press forward conquering and to conquer. It summons men to the expression of Christ's spirit in personal service redeeming and relating every department of life to the divine Master.

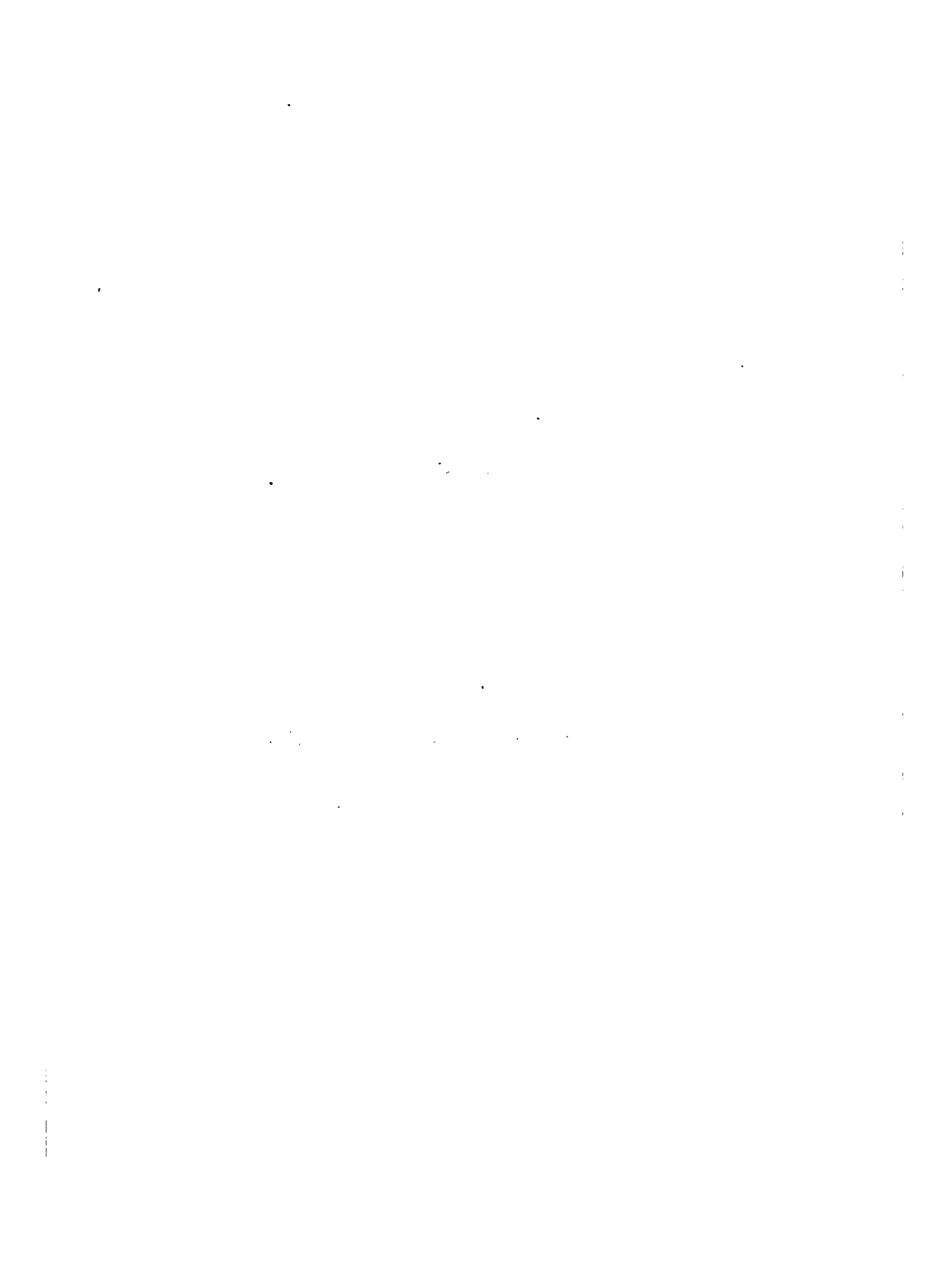




Immediately

Text

Galatians 1 : 16. Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.



Immediately



WE have in this text the working principle of St. Paul's ministry — instant, unhesitating obedience to God. It teaches the validity of first impulse as a guide in Christian life. The lesson finds abundant illustration. Very often when the minister presents the call to confirmation he is met with the answer, "I will come next time. I will be better prepared another year." Has another year found the person better prepared? Nay, it is a repetition of the old scene. Felix was moved profoundly by St. Paul's preaching but he dismissed the apostle saying, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." The convenient season never came!

You remember the story of the Greek chieftain who was the victim of a plot. A courier was sent to warn him. He tossed the letter aside unread with the indifferent comment, "Serious things tomorrow." That night he was slain. Behold now is the accepted time. Behold now is the day of salvation.

There is nothing so fatal in religious life as delay. Woe to him who postpones the hour of decision. The saddest experience is to look back upon lost opportunity and see what might have been. A mother lay dying. The eldest son stood by her bedside. You have been a good mother, he exclaimed. You never said so before John, came the feeble reply and she was gone. This is the tragedy of life. Words of appreciation are unspoken while hearts hunger for the sound. Deeds of kindness are undone. Noble impulses are smothered. Men postpone the day until it is too late. The door is shut.

You never had a good thought in your heart that was not placed there by God. The momentary impulse toward better things that swept over you was heaven's whisper. The high aspiration that lingered just a moment was the voice of the Holy Spirit. The sound theology of the Book of Common Prayer teaches us to say,

"O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed."

If there comes to you this day an holy impulse act on it immediately. To disregard it is to harden your heart against God. That impulse was the voice of the eternal Spirit leading you. Quench not the

Spirit. Grieve not the Spirit. Resist not the Spirit. Alas, that men should drive away His blessed influence. This is what the Bible means by the sin against the Holy Ghost—the wilful crushing and choking of these gentle pleadings from on high.

I believe that the Spirit speaks to every man. Who in this congregation has not known moments of spiritual exaltation when he has been on the mountain top with God? We have recollections we cannot quite fix. There come to us childhood memories of wonderful happiness, of ecstatic joy, a sort of vague reminiscence that flashes over us and vanishes. At times there have swept over our souls feelings which no human words can adequately describe.

“Like tides on a crescent sea beach,
When the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings
Come welling and surging in—
Come from the mystic ocean,
Whose rim no foot has trod—”

To Plato this experience furnished the foundation of a theory of knowledge. “These shadowy recollections are the fountain light of all our day.” Wordsworth interpreted them as intimations of immortality. “Our birth is but a sleep and a forget-

ting." I believe the phenomenon admits of a more profound explanation. It is the whisper of God in the soul witnessing to the spirituality of man. Clad in clay and compassed with infirmity we are in the midst of a spiritual world. Engrossed with material things we fail oftentimes to interpret the divine message. But in those moments when the soul's life is at its highest and its vision most keen the voice is heard and forces beyond ourselves sweep over us. Every noble impulse is thus begotten of God.

One day there comes into your mind the desire to consecrate yourself to the Master's service. Perhaps in the darkness of bereavement there comes into your heart the inclination to undertake some work for God. Hosea lay prostrate under the bitterness of a sorrow that wrecked his home and from his life experience he learned his higher mission as Jehovah's prophet. Thus God is ever communicating his will. Thus he brings his purposes to pass. Thus he leads men. The divine Spirit breathes the thought into some responsive heart and hospitals are built, churches founded, universities endowed, thousands of beneficent enterprises called into being.

Some time ago in one of our southern cities I visited a college for the higher education of women.

Back of that institution is the story of a sorrow. An only child was taken, a gentle, sweet young girl. In the hour of loneliness and overwhelming grief there flashed into the mother's mind the conception of the Sophie Newcomb College. A heart chastened and made responsive by bereavement, the whisper of a thought by the in-breathing spirit of God, its fruitage in the noble institution that was brought to birth. This is the divine method.

But perhaps some one is asking how can I receive these intimations. How can I interpret the will of God concerning my life. The reason we sometimes fail is because we are not living on a high plane. When St. Paul received revelations he was in a state of great spiritual exaltation. Read his own description where he says: "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

And I knew such a man,) whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for

a man to utter." This is the record of no ordinary self complacent man. It is the word of one possessed by God, yearning for the divine secret, living in close touch with the unseen. Too many Christians are on the frontier. They never reach the point of enthusiasm. The supreme need is more spirituality. Our prayer must be, "Lord, increase our faith." There is call for men who have sounded the depths of God's word so that the hearts of their fellows burn within them as they open up the Scriptures. There is call for men of such earnestness that they come from the holy communion aglow with the sense of the divine presence even as the face of Moses shone when he came down from the mount of God.

But I imagine some one saying, ah, yes, this is beautiful. I admire its sublimity. I yearn for this power and peace when I read it in the life of some saint, but it is not for me. It is too visionary. It might do well enough for St. Paul but I am a busy man of the twentieth century. I feel the keen competitions of commercial life. I win my bread with a struggle. St. Paul is no example for me.

You never gave utterance to a greater fallacy. St. Paul was a business man. He earned his livelihood by following his trade. No man in this city

carries larger responsibilities than did St. Paul. His was not the life of a recluse. It was the life of a man who entered into the arena of the world's struggles and carried the inspiration of Christ to the settlement of every problem. He made Christ the partner in every transaction and his work took on beauty, symmetry and power. Hereunto are we called not to separate ourselves from our fellow-men but to bring Christ's principles to bear on all the complex relations of human life. Can this be done? Does Christianity offer a possible program for the men of to-day? We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. Christianity has won the allegiance of strong men. They have tested the gospel and bear witness to its claims. Gladstone the statesman, Gordon the soldier, Browning the seer, McKinley the martyr, Lord Kelvin the scientist, a Brent in the Philippines, a George C. Thomas in Philadelphia business life are but typical of hundreds in every department of human affairs who are shaping their lives according to the principles of the Master. Their experience justifies the testimony that the old is better. The world has not outgrown the ethics of Jesus. May God raise up men who will rally to the old standards and

Follow Christ the King,
Live pure, speak true, right wrong,
Follow the King—
Else wherefore born.

Personal Service

Text

Gen. 43-5. Ye shall not see my face except your brother be with you.

Personal Service



THE full significance of this saying becomes apparent when we read it as an allegory of the spiritual life. As Joseph's brethren could not see his face unless their brother was with them, so to-day a man gains the vision of God's countenance as he labors to bring his brethren to a realization of the divine message. Let me dwell on this. Much Christian teaching has neglected an important element. We have talked of prayer and church going of the Scriptures and the sacraments but we fall short of the Master's ideal unless we include active interest in the salvation of others as an indispensable factor in spiritual growth. With increasing force the conviction sweeps over me year by year that a man knows God in proportion as he loves and serves men. Personal service is the key to the vision of God.

The foundation of religion is the possibility of communication between God and man. Granting that God would make known His will there are many ways He might have chosen. He might have

written it upon the rocks or among the stars. He might have committed the message to angels or revealed himself personally to each individual. Far other was the method of divine Providence. In the beginning God chose a family. The family widened into a nation. The glory of the Hebrew is that through him there was given to the world the knowledge of the true God. When the fullness of the time was come God sent his Son. The Master drew men about him. He wrote no book nor did he command except in one instance that anything be committed to writing. He founded a society. He impressed his truth on human hearts and sent forth living witnesses to bear his message to mankind. Through all ages and dispensations God's method has been the same. He touches the world through men and women. Consecrated personality is the method of Christianity. You and I are God's fellow-workers in the redemption of men.

The acceptance of our responsibility as God's fellow-laborers becomes the means of our own spiritual development. In seeking the salvation of his brother a man brings God nearer himself. He realizes the divine purpose of life. The consciousness of mission gives strength. Life finds its mean-

ing in service. The secret of failure in many a life to-day is the lack of unselfish interest in others. Speaking of the career of an apparently successful man the other day one made the remark, "Yes, he has plenty to live on but nothing to live for." With all his getting he had missed the one thing needful. He was poor in lacking a worthy object in life. Let a noble ideal take possession of a man and he becomes a new creature. His life is enriched and thrills with new inspiration. He stands in his lot not by chance nor by self seeking but by the calling of God in Christ Jesus. The Master has a work for him to do.

No man ever labored for the uplifting of others without calling down a benediction on himself. The road to blessing is personal service. This idea is coming to the front in the thought of the church. It is the dominant note of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew and the Daughters of the King. You see it embodied in the ministry of that distinguished ecclesiastic whose visit has awakened such widespread interest. As a young man he made a remarkable record in East London. Taking up his residence in the midst of its awful poverty and depravity, he visited the people daily from house to house, drew men and boys about him, established

clubs for athletics—boxing, football, cricket—entered into sympathy with the people in their spiritual destitution, and became a power for Christ. Becoming Bishop of London he brought to his new responsibility the vision of God which had come to him in toilsome ministrations in the slums. And the reason our people rose up to do him honor is because in a very profound sense he is a man of God, the representative of the social aspect of Christianity in its efforts to seek and save the lost. "Ye shall not see my face except your brother be with you."

The author of *A Prophet in Babylon* has presented the picture of a fashionable church declining through the changed conditions of the neighborhood. There came to the pastor the consciousness that his ministry had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. He had been private chaplain to a few rich families instead of going to the people at large with the message of Christ. If the church is true to her mission she cannot be affected by changes in the neighborhood. There will always be souls to reach. Any church that goes forth in the spirit of the Master seeking the lost, comforting the broken hearted, cheering the lonely, will never want for support. Our great parishes are rising to this conception and finding themselves stronger than

ever. In ministering to the needs of humanity there has come to them a larger insight into things divine. They have gained the vision of God. They have renewed their strength. They have found fresh opportunity of service.

Sometimes there comes to us the yearning, "Oh if Christ were only here on earth, I would journey to Palestine to minister to him." Christ is here! He is here in the person of that little child whom you can teach. He is here in the person of that young man whose life waits the word of brotherly affection and counsel to turn it into the warmth of God's love. He is here in that family in the tenement who in their loneliness are tempted sometimes to feel that no man cares for their souls.

I shall never forget a story I once heard at a great meeting in New York that illustrates the point I want to make. The speaker told of an aged couple in a near tenement, drunken, careless, indifferent. By persistent kindly visits they were awakened to better things. They began to come to church. One day the woman was taken sick. They cared for her tenderly but the shadow deepened upon her life and she sent for the parish visitor and she placed in her hands a little roll of money the sav-

ings of all the years and she said, "I know I am going to my Saviour. I want to ask you something. Do you think it would be wrong if you had a gray dress made for me when I am gone? All my life I have wanted a gray dress." She had her gray dress at the last and lay cold in the calm repose of death with a smile of peace upon her face. And a few days after, a friend came to the mother's meeting and said to the visitor in charge. "I come to bring a message from the woman who died. She told me to come and bring this message, her last words, and to speak it before all the women in the meeting: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me.'"



The Secret of Happiness

Text

11 Samuel 9 : 1. And David said, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake ? "



The Secret of Happiness



THESE words introduce a striking incident in the life of David. They were spoken when he was settled in the kingdom. He recalls the dark days when every hand was raised against him and like a fair vision out of the gloom rises the memory of Jonathan's friendship so genuine and unselfish. What return can I make he muses. Jonathan is in his grave, but is there yet any of his posterity left? And he sends for the lame boy and gives him place at the royal table. Years before Jonathan befriended David in the hour of sore distress. Now David repays his kindness by befriending his son. The father's good deed comes back in benediction on the head of the child.

Kindness is the investment that never fails. Houses may be swept away by some upheaval of nature. Securities may shrink through some disturbance of the financial world, but years from now, when the generations sweep over your grave, your children will reap the fruitage of your kind

acts. Such was the experience of Jonathan's son and this is a parable of all life.

If we look beneath the surface and penetrate the deeper meaning of the incident we shall find that it involves the secret of happiness. Happiness does not consist in anything external. Men have amassed fortunes and not found happiness. Men have gained thrones only to discover that uneasy lies the head that wears a crown. Men have seen their long cherished ambitions realized and standing on the heights of fame have found themselves restless, dissatisfied, yearning for they know not what! Alexander weeping because there were no more worlds to conquer is a type of the whole situation. Men turn in dissatisfaction from their greatest achievements.

On the other hand, we are struck by the happiness of people, who humanly speaking, seem to have nothing to live for. The Bishop of London, describing an afternoon spent in the slums, bears witness: "I went down after our beautiful service in St. Paul's Cathedral, to spend the afternoon among the homes of the very poor. The first I entered was that of a woman who for twenty-five years had been lying in a state of unceasing pain. But I found her radiant. She had

been to church—carried there. She was blessed with the thought of her communion and you saw in her face the joy which the world could not give. My next visit was to a home a few streets off. The father had become blind in the prime of life. When I went to him he had a paroxysm of excruciating pain and I said to the brave little wife, what do you do when he is as bad as this? And the wife, who earns the living by selling things at a stall in the street said: Oh, Annie sings to him. And the nine year old girl stood up and sang a hymn in her sweet childish voice and as she sang there came a look of peace on the man's face that settled into joy."

In a fascinating piece of historical fiction entitled, "Darkness and Dawn," Farrar draws the contrast between Nero, Seneca, Agrippina, who were rich, praised, powerful, yet full of misery and despair, and the Christians, poor and persecuted, yet filled with joy. Here were slaves in Caesar's household, whose faces bore the stamp of toil and hardship and yet the worn countenances have something of the splendor and surprise of a divine secret. They felt the peace of God, which passeth knowledge. They knew no failure, no defeat, no discouragement. They had learned the

secret of happiness. Happiness is independent of external things. It is the possession of the inner spirit. It begins deep down in the soul and flows out. The Kingdom of God is within you. In a profound sense each creates his own world. What we receive is the reflex of what we give. At last analysis everything goes back to the soul as one writer says: "The entire charm which the exterior world seems to possess for us resides in ourselves, emanates from us, is diffused by us, each one for himself of course, and is only reflected back to us."

We know that heat and sound and light are modes of motion. There is a vibration in the air which the ear interprets as the harmony of sweet song. A disturbance in the ether affects the delicate retina and we see the glorious rainbow. The natural world is a symbol of the spiritual. Every deed of kindness sets vibrations in motion. Every life begets a subtle influence. This influence lives. It comes back to you. It reacts on your children. The harp may be broken, but the music never dies. I was listening to a phonograph the other day as it reproduced the very tones of the human voice and a mother gone to rest seemed to be singing again. Nothing is ever lost. You never spoke a kind word that did not set echoes ringing that

will reverberate forever in the galleries of eternity. You never put forth your hand to ease the burden of a brother that the action will not come back with blessing to yourself and your children. There is immortality in kindness. Perhaps as you listen to me there comes back the memory of some word spoken years ago. We treasure the childhood memories of mother's love, of counsels from the lips of godly parent or teacher. The word that cheers a toiling brother, that inspires the depressed and comforts the sad can never die. Like Joseph's fruitful bough, it knows no limitation. The branches run over the wall shedding fragrance and beauty. Make liberal investments in kindness, unselfishness, love. Shift the centre of gravity from self to others. Believe me thus shall you call down blessing on your own life. It is more blessed to give than to receive. Cast thy bread upon the waters for thou shalt find it after many days. Fill your life to the brim with unselfish interest in others. Verily you and your children shall reap the reward. This was the experience of Jonathans' son. This shall be verified in your life.

Symbolism of the Sea

Text

Revelation 21-1. There was no more sea.

Symbolism of the Sea



HERE is a striking passage in Loti, where he describes a child's first impression of the ocean at twilight: "Suddenly I stood still, rigid and shivering with terror. In front of me lay something — something dark and sounding — which had risen up on all sides at once, and seemed to be without end. It was of an obscure green, almost black. It looked unstable, treacherous, greedy, seething and raving. Above it stretched the sky in unbroken leaden gray. I was fascinated. What I felt in its presence was not simple dread, but a nameless melancholy, a sense of desolate solitude, desertion, exile."

The sea! There is a peculiar fascination about it which has written itself indelibly on the literature of every people. The immortal dramas of Euripides among the ancient Greeks, Beowulf of our Saxon forefathers, reflect the spirit of the great deep. The imagery is drawn from the seafaring life. Old ocean forms the background. The stanzas ring with the spirit of the vikings. One hears the roar of distant

waves. He sees the billows breaking at his feet. He feels the greatness and sublimity of nature.

You remember the scene in Xenophon where the writer describes the retreat of the Ten Thousand? They had suffered privation and hardship. They were miles from home. They had seen their companions perish on the field of contest. The battle was against them. Their banner had gone down in defeat. The discouraged remnant had tramped many a weary mile, scarce knowing whither they went. One day they came to a hilltop. As they reached the summit, lo! in the distance a vision of the sea burst on their sight. Defeat was forgotten as the word passed from man to man, until a shout of joy broke from the whole army: The sea! the sea! It brought new courage; it inspired enthusiasm. Disappointment gave place to mirth. The old spirit of adventure took possession of them. The old-time buoyancy returned. The love of the heroic filled their hearts. The waters lured them on to daring exploit. They were overcome with emotion, even as Balboa looking for the first time on the Pacific, sank to his knees in prayer.

The imagery of the sea meets us over and over again in the Bible and in the writings of the early Christians. Sometimes the sea stands for unbridled

strength. Sometimes it stands for mystery. Sometimes it is the type of turmoil and unrest. Sometimes it represents the world. Its turbulent waters stand for instability, unsatisfactoriness, the evanescence of temporal things. The Church, under the stress of adversity, is compared to a vessel at the mercy of the wave. The early places of worship carried out the thought. We have the architectural term "nave" from the Latin "navis," a ship. The fish is a common symbol on the Christian tombs. As the fish is born in water, so the Christian is born to God in the waters of holy baptism.

The sea is so bound up with our earthly conceptions that we are startled when St. John, in his wonderful description of heaven, reaches a climax in the statement, "There was no more sea." The Book of Revelation is not to be taken literally. It is the record of a vision. Spiritual truth is clothed in poetry and symbol. All language is too meagre to give expression to the deep things of God. Human speech is inadequate to convey the conception of that which neither eye hath seen nor ear heard. St. John sets forth the splendor of heaven under the figures of gold, precious stones and pearls, but these only faintly mirror forth its glory, for it is a glory that passes human comprehension. When

John wrote he was an exile in Patmos. The sea-bound isle cut him off from friends and companions. The cruel emperor had banished him to that island prison. We can picture the apostle standing on the seashore, stretching his eye over the blue water. It was the Lord's day. His mind goes back to the Christian assembly. Their names and faces come before him. He longs for some word from them. But the sea lashing upon the rocky coast separates the lonely exile from the fellowship of the faithful. As he looks, the whole matter is lifted to a higher plane. He sees heaven open. He sees the new earth, and there is no more sea. The sea stands for separation, parting, division. There flashes upon him the vision of that land where there shall be no more separation, but we shall all be home with God. You know what tender associations cluster around the fireside. The very word awakens sacred memories. Travelers tell us how, on the shores of the Adriatic, the wives of the fishermen come down at sunset and sing their national melodies. They pause, and soon an answering strain is heard from the far off waters. Thus they sing and listen until their husbands and brothers in the distance catch the echo and join the chorus, and the watchers are thrilled with the thought that their loved ones are

almost home. Why is it that the home is surrounded by so much poetry and romance? It is because the home is the centre of the family unity. When the day's toil is over, the father gathers the children at the hearthstone. The little one plays on the grandfather's knee. Oh, how bitter the pain when the unity is broken! How desolate when God calls one of those little ones or when the head of the house is taken! The prayer of Jesus is the universal prayer, "Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am." We cannot bear the thought of separation from our dear ones. These earthly homes, in the happiness of their unbroken circle, are the faint foreshadowings of that realm where sorrow never comes, and where God shall wipe away all tears.

Our text brings a message of comfort. If it meant much to the exile in his loneliness and isolation, it has lost none of its meaning to-day. As long as we live in a perishing world, as long as death is a factor in life, as long as men lay the cold forms of dear ones away and hear the sound of the earth on the coffin, and stand face to face with the infinite mystery, so long the heart will look up through its tears and welcome the revelation of that land where there is no more sea.

The mystic dreaming in the Aegean isle,
While all he loves in life are far away
And blue waves lap his little rocky prison,
Tells of a life where parting's pain shall cease
And on the golden page puts down the words
There shall be no more sea.

Light at Eventide

Text

Zechariah 14: 6-7. And it shall come to pass in that day that the light shall not be clear nor dark but it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light.

Light at Eventide



IN his description of a stormy day on Ullswater a writer says: "All morning long the dreary rain fell over field and woodland. Toward evening the sky cleared. From the west came a flood of generous light. Boats were astir on the bosom of the lake. Star drift besprinkled the violet dome. After storm—calm. Refreshment and peace at eventide." Perhaps a similar scene was in the mind of the prophet as he wrote: "It shall come to pass in that day that the light shall not be clear nor dark but at evening time it shall be light."

Is not this a parable of all life? Watch the proud vessel leaving port. She laughs at disaster. She skims over the water with flag flying. Suddenly the sky darkens. The storm lashes the sea into fury. The waves dash high and the frail bark rocks under the mighty force of the billows. When the storm has spent its force she glides into the haven as sunset bathes the water with crimson and gold. All is calm. There is light at eventide.

See the army on the march to battle. High hope

consciousness adds its testimony and vindicates its faith by pointing to the empty tomb in the garden. Easter gives the interpretation of life. The incompleteness, the imperfection, the changes, chances and bereavements, the cravings unfulfilled, the ambitions disappointed, the hopes shattered, the injustices never righted can only find explanation in the faith in immortality. We can be satisfied with nothing less than the assurance that our identity is an eternal reality and for each soul there is the power of endless life.

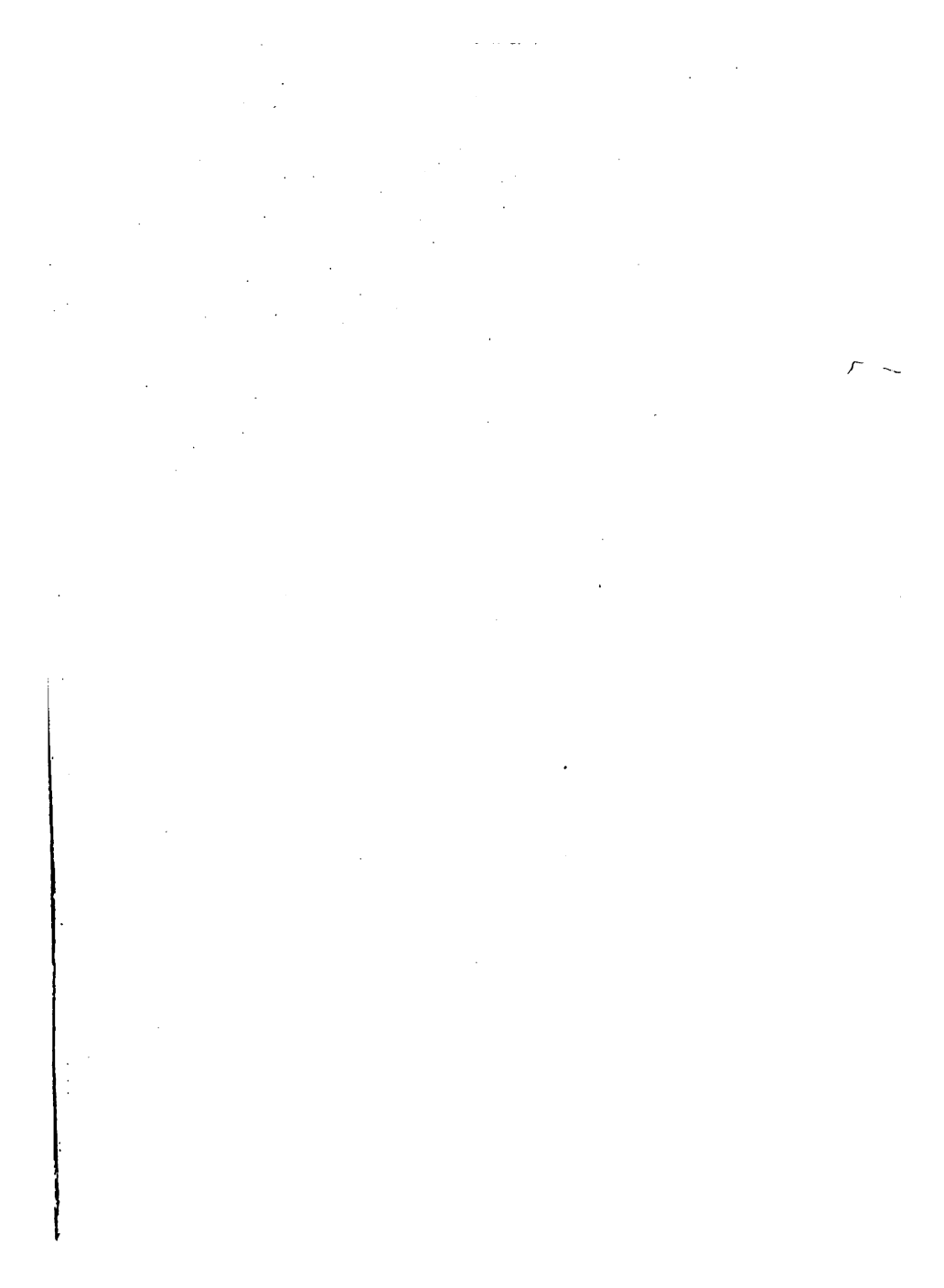
When the church bells of Salcombe were calling to evensong their echo stole across the quiet water to the poet who was sitting on the deck of his yacht and gave him the inspiration for these immortal lines :

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark.

And may there be no sadness of farewell when I embark ;
For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place

The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

This is the Christian's confidence. This gives unspeakable comfort. Many a mother's thought goes back to the tomb where the baby boy lies buried. Many a young man fondly turns to the grave where mother sleeps. We know that we shall meet again. There will be a reunion in the Father's presence, when He will give back our dear ones to dwell with us forever in the mansion of His house.



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